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ABSTRACT

This review deals with the interest of some junior college educators in taking a stand against the belief that community college enrollments will continue to increase indefinitely. The first stand was made by the Arizona State Board of Directors for Junior Colleges, which called for at least 5-year moratorium on new junior colleges after 1969 in that state. On the other hand, professional state associations, the American Association of Junior Colleges, the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, and the federal government have advocated the creation of more colleges. Although the idea of a moratorium on new junior colleges is largely unpopular, the current financial crisis may warrant it and numerous population projections reveal a decreasing number of potential community college students. Reports of studies conducted at community colleges throughout the nation are cited to support this view, as well as results of efforts expended at certain colleges where more efficient use of classroom space has been made in light of anticipated decreasing enrollments. (AL)

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MORATORIUM ON NEW JUNIOR COLLEGES

Despite tremendous enrollment increases during the post-World War II period and despite the predictions of a continuing upward trend, a few educators have been brash enough to question the belief that enrollments will keep going up indefinitely. In 1969, when most educators were proclaiming the need for more community colleges, a little-noticed report, *We Believe*, issued by the Arizona State Board of Directors for Junior Colleges, advocated a moratorium. Based on its eight years' experience as a Board, on a special study of the status of community colleges by Marsden B. Stokes, Director of the Bureau of Educational Research and Services at the University of Arizona, and on a subsequent State Board Workshop in 1968, the Board announced that, since its "concern at this time is over-saturation rather than insufficient provisions" for the enrollments of the next decade, "we believe that a moratorium of not less than five years should transpire after 1969 before additional junior college districts are established." The report suggested that "it seems wise to allow time to observe the effects that the three new college districts will have on the educational needs in Arizona" (3:11-12).

This view had and still has few adherents among the community college educators, their professional state associations, the American Association of Junior Colleges, and particularly the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education and the federal government. Instead of a moratorium, they advocate creating more colleges, pointing to the constantly expanding enrollment statistics caused by population growth, a larger proportion of high school graduates going to college, and the diversion of freshmen from senior institutions because of cutbacks and closings. In its series of reports, the Carnegie Commission keeps stressing the need for more community colleges. In June 1970 it estimated that by 1980, 230 to 280 colleges should be established if the goal of a "community college within commuting distance of every potential student is to be achieved" (6:35). [In a later report, 1971, the range was 175 to 235 (15:70)]. The Commission did add: "Caution seems especially appropriate in view of the fact that entirely new types of educational experience beyond high school may develop in the future, attracting some of the students who might otherwise enroll in community colleges" (6:35), but this caution was ignored by the press as well as by the educators. The recommendations for expansion had a positiveness that few questioned. The Commission believes that other factors will counteract the effects of the demographic trends that point to a decrease in the 18-21-year age group by 1980.

In a 1968 Special Report stressing "budget-tightening measures reminiscent of those taken in days of the Great Depression," the editors, reflecting the views of 500 college and university presidents, wrote as if the enrollment trends of the fifties and early sixties would continue indefinitely. No caution or doubt appeared in any of the numerous quotations predicting that the colleges and universities would have to serve even more millions in the years ahead (10).

In the face of these pronouncements and predictions, a moratorium may seem unrealistic. For some states and for some communities, this may be true. They will have to open new colleges if open access to higher education is to become a reality, as the Carnegie Commission points out. However, while a moratorium may be unpopular in many states, it makes sense in light of population projections, the percentage of high school graduates entering college, and the declining rate of enrollment increase in the elementary and secondary schools. It is unlikely that these demographic effects on enrollment will be offset by enrollments of adults as suggested by the Carnegie Commission (6:35) and others.

Recently, Chancellor Allan Cartter of New York University called attention to population projections that support those favoring a moratorium on new colleges and new buildings on existing campuses. In his analysis of population trends, Cartter points out that the 18-21-year age group, after rising until 1975, will shrink by more than 2.75 million in 1988 and, by 1980, the percentage of high school graduates entering college will reach saturation (7:5). Thereafter, "there will be an absolute decline in the number of eligible students" (8:9).

Cartter also points out (as do some community college educators) that the rate of enrollment increase is slowing down. He notes that, as the percentage of high school graduates going to college approaches 80, the rate will reach its maximum – sometime in the early 1980s (8:9).

Community college educators across the country were shaken by the disappointing fall 1971 enrollments. The contrast between the headlines of 1970 and 1971 reflects the disappointment and surprise. The caption of a 1970 California Junior College Association *CJCA News* feature article, "J.C. Enrollment—It Just Keeps Climbing" (4a:1), was matched by *School and Society's* "Junior colleges steal the show in enrollments—increases up to 17 per cent" (21:125). The 1971 headlines: "Enrollment Stalls" (18c), "Enrollment Slowdown: Here's Why" (4c:1), "College Sign-Ups Sag" (4c:5)* reveal that an awakening to the demographic realities is taking place among community college educators, just as it had a year or so earlier among graduate school educators.

In California, Michigan, Illinois – three of the largest junior college states – the slowdown caused anxiety. A Michigan college president told his administrative council that the "projected FYES (fiscal year equated students) will be below our estimates and this will, of course, affect our state aid" (20). One month later he advised his cabinet that, in the light of

*Quoting a headline from the *Redwood City Tribune*

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the 1971 Student Enrollment Report, "enrollment projections for next year should be reduced." He added, "there are many variables to consider, but the days of annual student enrollment expansion seems to be a thing of the past" (19:4). A similar note was struck by a California writer of the lead article in *CJCA News*, who wrote, "whatever the reasons [for the enrollment sag] the phenomenon is here." In the same article a Skyline College administrator stated: "It's clear we're turning some kind of corner. It will be interesting to see what it is" (4c:8).

More than two-thirds of the 30 northern California presidents reported "either a decline in actual enrollment or falling short of estimates" (4c:3). Cited were the experiences of: Fresno City College, which projected an enrollment of 8,300 and registered 7,800; San Diego Mesa College, where students enrolled in 109,000 weekly student contact hours versus 115,000 in the fall 1970 semester; San Mateo Junior College District (3 colleges), which anticipated 13,900 but enrolled only 13,107; Los Rio Junior College District (3 colleges), which had a 5% increase instead of a predicted 10%. No less embarrassing than the experiences of California colleges are those of "The Iowa Lakes Community College, [which] underwent a severe crisis when it came up 200 students and $160,000 short of expectations," and of Worthington State Junior College in Minnesota, which also lost students (1:6).

The California experience was particularly embarrassing to the educators, since they had predicted that "an unprecedented rise in enrollment awaits the opening of the fall 1971 school year for California's vast junior college system." The 95 public and private colleges were expected to register close to 850,000 students – 232,000 full time and 510,000 part time. The *CJCA News* writer of the box item "Enrollment Swells" added the glowing observation: "The growth rate of the world's largest single collection of higher education institutions continues to exceed even the most expert of estimates" (4b:8).

Of the 46 Illinois colleges, 27 enrolled fewer full-time student equivalents than they had projected. For a few colleges the discrepancy approached 20 to 25%. For the state as a whole the actual FTE enrollment was down slightly more than 5% from the college projections. The headcount exceeded the projections 187,401 to 183,986, for a gain of just above 2%. The projections and actual enrollments of seven of these colleges are listed in Table A below. The last line is the total for the 46 colleges.

TABLE A

Name of College	College Projections FTE Student	Actual Enrollment FTE Student
Du Page	7,254	5,780
Triton	5,973	5,843
Illinois Central	4,874	4,641
Parkland	3,063	2,686
Illinois Valley	2,239	1,940
Highland	1,018	976
Shawnee	934	692
46 Colleges	111,972	106,280

The 1971 FTE enrollment is still 11,663 larger than the 1970 enrollment; but as can be seen from Table B, the rate of growth slipped from 19.6% in 1970 to 12.3% in 1971. The headcount rate of growth also declined from 14.8 to 10.4%.

TABLE B

	FTE Enrollment	% of growth over previous year	Headcount	% of growth over previous year
Fall 1969	79,676		147,882	
Fall 1970	94,617	19.6	169,691	14.8
Fall 1971	106,280	12.3	187,401	10.4
(13:4) (14:5)*				

*Sources for FTE data for 1969 and 1970.

As Cartter observed of graduate school educators, community college educators have also shown an "unwillingness to view objectively either the present or the future" (8:3), acting "like amateur forecasters" who believe "the best forecast for tomorrow" will be "an exact duplicate of today (8:4); thus, while college enrollments are rapidly expanding, [they] acted as though this rate of growth would continue unabated" (8:3-4). This explains why most community college educators do not analyze their own statistics, which show clearly that the rate of yearly increase, after rising to 25.1% in 1965, has since fluctuated between 18.5 and 13.3% (2:8). In 1971 public two-year college enrollment increased by 7.8% over 1970. Assuming that the 1971 figures are comparable to the AAJC tabulations (which may be a doubtful assumption), the declining rate of growth continues (9:1). A leveling of the rate of increase in student headcount enrollment was noted in Illinois in the fall of 1969 (12:2). Enrollments in the California elementary and secondary schools have shown either an absolute decline or a markedly reduced rate of increase. Including junior colleges, the rate of growth of average daily attendance fell from 6.54 in 1959-60 to 1.53 in 1968-69, dropping in seven of the ten years (5:74). The declining high school enrollments of the past two or three years should have been a warning to community college administrators, but most of them ignored these signs. It is not surprising that the failure to record spectacular increases in the fall of 1971 embarrassed many of them who had prepared budgets based on the predicted growth rate.

In their assessment of the downtrend in the rate of increase, educators cite many causes for the disappointing results of 1971. The most obvious and the best-documented cause is the decline in elementary and secondary school enrollments, the major source of their students. The huge Los Angeles Unified District experienced a drop of 13,000 instead of a projected increase of 18,000. In percentage, the decline was only 1.7, but it was the third consecutive year of decreases. For the state a similar trend had been observed, first in the elementary, and then in the secondary enrollment (18c). In the rural, farm, and many urban areas, population is declining, while in the newer suburban areas the rate of increase is slowing down (1:7).

The other causes are not as directly related as the first. Because of liberal deferment policies for students, college has been a haven for draftable young persons. With the change in the draft laws, draft deferment for attending college no longer seems assured. At the same time, with the withdrawal from Vietnam, the draft is not as serious a threat to students as formerly. The registrar of Skyline College (San Mateo District) believes "one of the big reasons [for the decline] seems to be that travel is becoming an alternative to going to college. There were five times as many students on the road this summer as compared to the past" (4c:3).

Still other causes are related to the rising costs of attending community colleges. Contrary to popular impression, most community colleges charge tuition and nearly all of them impose fees of various kinds. The rise in these costs has been gradual but steady. When jobs were readily available, students managed to pay or borrow the money to stay in college. Since the recession of 1969, jobs have become scarce, forcing some students to drop out of college for lack of money and causing others who have jobs to hold on to them, thereby delaying their entrance to college. Some areas were particularly hard hit by the recession when major industries closed plants (1:6-7).

Conclusion

Is today's decline a temporary phenomenon? Based on the latest studies on population, the answer "no" has a high probability of proving accurate. Two studies are particularly pertinent and confirm Cartter's analysis of population trends. In early September 1971, the Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies reported 15.5% fewer children under five years of age in 1970 than in 1960. More remarkable is that

the decrease occurred at the same time that the number of child-bearing couples in the 15-34-year age bracket increased by 29% and those in the 20-24-year age group went up by 52% (18a). A week later the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare reported (for the first six months of 1971) 17,000 fewer births than during the same period of 1970 (18b). Both these reports confirm Cartter's analysis of the population trends. In December 1970 he reported the under-five population was 13% below its 1965 level (8:9). Although the Washington Center report cautions that "it is possible that the generation just being born will decide to have babies at a considerably more rapid rate than today's young adults," it considers a zero population growth in this century a "distinct possibility" (18a).

Those educators who have had to make budgetary adjustments resulting from over-projections of enrollments will follow the cautiousness of the president of Macomb County Community College and the Skyline College administrator quoted earlier. Those who did not suffer a decline may do well to study the population statistics and elementary and secondary school enrollments before making projections for the next five years. Most of the experts studying population and school attendance trends agree that they are national rather than regional or local phenomena. The complacency and comfort of the past 15 years will be replaced by concern and pain. If the concern and pain lead to the "reassessment of our educational goals," then a revitalization of community college education becomes a socially beneficial corrective (7:6).

A moratorium on new buildings is even more urgent than one on new colleges. The slowdown in enrollment, if sustained, will find many colleges with much more unused capacity than they now have. A common practice in many community colleges, as in most institutions of higher education, is to have high utilization in the morning hours and low in the afternoon. An example that can be multiplied throughout the country comes from a candid report of a Michigan president who pointed out to his faculty that classroom use at the college was 61% for the 8 to 12 o'clock hours and 28% from 1 to 4. Then he commented that the statistics "show dramatically to the layman that we have space to spare, and he'll never be convinced that, before we can fill it, we'll need 4,000 more students and 100 more faculty members" (11: App. 5). The layman may also wonder why the college planned for such a large enrollment. Mrs. Marian La Follette, president of the Board of Trustees, warned the administrators that taxpayers regard sparsely populated classrooms and unused facilities as major contributions to the financial crisis (17).

A moratorium will force educators to improve the use of classroom space. Improved planning of facilities will help in reducing the need for capital-outlay funds for new buildings and even new campuses. Also, fewer buildings ensure lower maintenance costs. Restricting the number of teaching stations will force administrators, faculty, and students to use the facilities at full capacity from morning until late afternoon. During the financial crisis, it is a luxury for classrooms to be idle during the afternoon hours, but as long as colleges are overbuilt, classes will be concentrated during the morning hours. As the practice continues, changing it will become increasingly difficult.

Effective use comes dramatically when enrollment increases beyond expectations. At Longview College in Kansas City (Missouri), where enrollment increased 47.2%, "the percentage of possible day-time use based on a forty-hour week for general classrooms increased from 53.1% in the first semester 1969-1970 to 79.1% during the first semester 1970-1971" (16:10).

To maintain this high degree of use will require considerable restraint on educational planning for the future. If Longview educators follow expansionist views, it will not be too difficult to predict that utilization of their new buildings will revert to the pre-1969 rate.

In the light of the September 1971 experiences of many colleges, the call for a moratorium by the Arizona State Board of Directors for Junior Colleges may prove to be one of the most prophetic statements made by a community college group. It must have taken a good deal of courage to make public such a pronouncement, when nearly every educator and educational group had been and is still predicting unlimited expansion.

Even if this 1971 enrollment experience should prove to be a temporary phenomenon, caution is still advisable. It is unlikely that the population trends will be reversed or that the great expansion of the sixties will be repeated (18d). Administrators will serve their communities and help resolve the financial crisis by restraint in constructing new colleges or adding new buildings to campuses.

John Lombardi

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